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THE TWILIGHT CHRISTIANS OF JAPAN

By
MICHAEL COOPER

IT WAS just over a century ago when Commodore Perry, U.S.N., sailed into Edo Bay and penetrated the Japanese bamboo curtain, a far more rigorous barrier than its modern Chinese counterpart, and thus took the first step to bring to an end the self-imposed isolation of Japan which had lasted for over two hundred years. The opening up of the islands was hailed in trading circles by those who wished to resume the lucrative trade with the country which had been so abruptly terminated in 1638. Subsequent attempts to persuade the Japanese to lift the ban had ended in disastrous failure; a Portuguese delegation from Macao in 1640 was arrested, those refusing to apostatise were executed and a handful of sailors was sent home with the ominous warning, "As long as the sun warms the earth, let no Christian be so bold as to come to Japan and let all know that if King Philip himself or even the very God of the Christians or the very Buddha himself contravene this prohibition, they shall pay for it with their heads."

But if Japan's resumption of relations with the outside world was welcomed by commercial interests, it was viewed no less joyfully in Rome, for the Church could now resume, though only to a limited extent at first, its apostolate in Japan interrupted by years of some of the savagest persecution in the annals of Christianity.

Accordingly, the work of starting all over again and rebuilding what was once a flourishing mission was entrusted to the Paris Foreign Missions. One of the missionaries, Père Petitjean, was posted at Nagasaki, where, after a discouraging start, for the local authorities did their best to hamper his work in every way, he began to discover the descendants of the original Christians in

Japan. Gradually groups of these people approached the missionaries, and to assure themselves that the newly arrived priests professed the same religion as those who had converted their forefathers some three hundred years previously, they frequently posed three questions. Did the missionaries venerate the Santa Maria? Did they acknowledge the "great chief of the Kingdom of Rome"? Were they celibate? When they received an affirmative answer to all three questions, the Christians "fell to their knees and wept for joy" at the thought that their long forced separation from the visible Church had at last come to an end.

However, if many of these Christians gladly returned to the Church and willingly accepted correction of some of their beliefs which not unnaturally had become corrupted during the long period they had been deprived of priests and contact with Rome, a considerable number of them, perhaps even half, were quite content to remain as they were and not to return to the Church. As the years passed, more and more communities of these so-called Old Christians came to light, and today their number stands between thirty to forty thousand believers. The largest group of them is to be found on Ikitsuki Island, off the west coast of southern Japan, where nine thousand of the ten thousand inhabitants are reputed to be Old Christians. It is impossible to provide a more accurate figure for centuries of persecution have left their mark on these people, and although complete religious freedom is nowadays fully guaranteed by Japanese law, the Old Christians still remain reticent and discourage investigation of their religion.

For the most part they are scattered in and around Kyushu, the southernmost island of Japan, and as most of the communities are autonomous, there is no uniform belief held by all. In fact, it is extremely difficult to learn what exactly they do believe on account not only of their uncommunicative nature but also because they themselves have no clear-cut idea of their own religion. Since the expulsion of most of the foreign missionaries in 1614, they have been deprived of the services of a priest, and the only sacrament they possess is baptism, which is generally administered by one of the village elders.

They have a strong devotion towards Our Lady, though it is doubtful whether they could explain her role in the Redemption, or even who she was. Yet if their knowledge regarding even the

most essential parts of the Catholic Faith appears so hazy, they have nevertheless preserved to a remarkable degree much of less importance that was taught to their ancestors centuries ago and has since been handed down from father to son. As a result, doctrine had largely been replaced by religious observances, for it has been found easier to pass down through the years ceremonies, prayers and objects of piety than the more abstract Christian doctrine, which as a consequence has become distorted and sometimes practically incomprehensible.

Items such as medals, religious pictures and manuscripts are still preserved with great veneration; even some seventeenth-century disciplines are treasured and are held over the sick to cure them of their illness. One interesting relic is a statue of Our Lady with the Infant on her lap, the figure being so designed that at first sight it appears to be Kannon, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy—a necessary precaution in the days when Christianity was forbidden under pain of torture and death. Even today among some communities a Buddhist monk is called in for the burial of the dead; this practice no doubt originated in the time when the *shumon aratame* or examination of religion was in force.

Every Japanese had to present himself once a year before the authorities and openly declare the Buddhist sect to which he and his family belonged. Most Christians outwardly complied with the order and to avoid incurring suspicion were obliged to invite a bonze to assist at the burial of members of their household. The custom still continues, though, as a token of their faith, the Old Christians usually place a paper cross inside the mouth of the corpse and shut the coffin before the arrival of the bonze, who then merely gestures symbolically with a pair of scissors instead of performing the customary rite of cutting the hair of the deceased.

The recital of prayers, or *orashiyo*, as they are called, plays an important part in the religious life of the Old Christians. Most of these prayers, including the *Confiteor*, *Salve Regina* and the Litanies of Our Lady, are known by memory, but have become so garbled that even those who recite them sometimes have little idea of what they are saying. A recent investigator found an old man who knew the Latin text of the *Miserere* but the words had become so corrupted that only a person well familiar with the psalm could have recognised it. One version of the *Ave*

Maria which is still in use begins: *Ave Maria, gurasu bena, do vesteko, beante suo*; as can be seen, the prayer is merely a faint echo of the original Latin text.

However, if the people cannot always understand the exact meaning of the words, they are often aware of the significance of a particular prayer, as one can easily note by their obvious sorrow and signs of repentance when they recite an act of contrition. Other words in their religious vocabulary are *tempensha* or penance, a word clearly derived from *poenitentia*, and *sakana-bento*, from the Spanish *sacramento*.

Possibly most interesting of all is the preservation of their ancient Christian calendar which is greatly revered; Lent (*Kuwarezima*, from the Spanish *cuaresma*, duly followed by *Pasuka*) is kept, and abstinence is observed on the appointed days; farming on Sundays (*Domingo*; the other days of the week are called *secunda*, *tertia*, etc.) is not allowed, although fishermen may put out to sea on that day. Major feast-days are often celebrated with prayer-meetings, although some communities only come together for public prayer about twice a year. The calendar is so highly venerated that it pertains to the office of the head of the community to see to its observance and to make another copy when the book shows sign of wear and tear. But much of the calendar remains a mystery to the people. On reading, "December 21st, St. Thomas, Apostle," a visitor asked the custodian what the word "Apostle" signified; after much beating round the bush the venerable old man had to admit that he did not know and listened to the explanation with obvious interest.

The office of the second official in the community is to attend to baptisms. Many different formulae for the administration of the sacrament can be found but the majority of them are so distorted that the validity of the sacrament must be considered doubtful. One version runs: *Yoko to bachizu monomizu in nomune pachizu monomizu et suhiru et superitsu santsu. Amen.* *Monomizu* is presumably compiled from the Japanese word *mizu*, water, and thus a reference to the baptismal water has been inserted into the text. Other versions used in conferring the sacrament are far more corrupted, and leave no doubt as to the invalidity of the baptism. This would seem to be the opinion of even some of the Old Christians themselves, for one recently confessed that his

father had been baptised *in extremis* by a Catholic priest, and he himself would like to follow his example before he died.

Other examples could be given which would illustrate more amply the astonishing patchwork of Christianity, Buddhism and pure superstition which goes to make up the faith of the Old Christians in Japan. Some parts of Catholicism have been preserved with a remarkable degree of purity, while others have become completely interwoven with Buddhist and sometimes Shintoist doctrines and practices. But the question which obviously comes to mind is why these people refuse to return to the Church. The answer is not at all easy, but perhaps two principal reasons may be given: distrust and pride.

There can be no doubt that most of the Old Christians are conscious of being Catholics, and are on the whole well disposed towards the Church. One priest reported that his congregation is doubled at Christmas Midnight Mass by the attendance of the local Old Christians, who present themselves *en bloc*. Yet centuries of violent and bitter persecution have left an almost fanatical love of their religious traditions and an inbred distrust of the outsider. Even now, eighty years since freedom of religion was established, the sympathetic inquirer may be brusquely asked if he has been sent by the police to spy on their activities. Possibly if their standard of living were higher, they would find less difficulty in identifying the "new" Catholics with the religion originally preached to their ancestors by St. Francis Xavier. But the vast majority of Old Christians are peasants eking out a poor living by cultivating barren plots of land, and such a realisation of the continuity of the Catholic Church seems beyond their intellectual grasp.

But however strong their persecution and catacomb complex may be, their refusal to return to the Church cannot be attributed entirely to motives of fear and distrust. It is clear that should a reconciliation ever come about, the priest would naturally assume the position of authority and respect, hitherto held by the leaders of the various Old Christian communities. The latter do not regard these consequences with any enthusiasm and discourage any movement towards the Church in order to retain their honoured status in the village. They also realise that the Church would have to expurgate the errors that have crept into their prayers, but as these prayers constitute the greater part of

their religious observances, they are regarded with deep veneration and reverence and it is precisely this inevitable reform which is perhaps the greatest deterrent against reunion.

The prospects of an early return to the Church are not bright. To the difficulties already mentioned, must be added the shortage of clergy in Japan. In some dioceses there is only a handful of Japanese secular priests, although in Nagasaki diocese, where most of the Old Christians are to be found, there are actually fifty-six secular priests; yet they are working among Catholics who in recent years have increased in numbers from 58,000 to 75,949. As can be imagined, the clergy is kept more than occupied in ministering to the needs of the faithful and instructing catechumens, and thus, at least for the time being, priests cannot be spared to concentrate exclusively on the conversion of the Old Christians. However, they are by no means forgotten, and continual investigation is being made of their customs and beliefs. The outstanding authority in this field is undoubtedly Professor Koya Tagita, a professor on the faculty of the Catholic University of Nanzan in Nagoya, who has spent more than twenty-five years in the patient study of the *hanare*, or separated Christians, and who published a few years ago some results of his investigations in a widely-acclaimed book.

The problem of the Old Christians is urgent and time is short. As the outlying districts of Kyushu are further opened up by radio and better communications and lose much of their present insularity, so will the influence of the Old Christians on the younger generations correspondingly decline and many young people, no longer satisfied with a vague and little understood faith, will drift away from Christianity into passive indifference. The mass conversion of the *hanare* would be a great impetus to the work of the conversion of Japan's millions, of whom only one in four hundred is Catholic, and would increase the Catholic population by one-sixth. Here then is yet another group to bear in mind when we pray "*ut unum sint.*"

ANGELA OF FOLIGNO

By

ANN STAFFORD

IN THE YEAR 1285, Angela, the beautiful, proud and pampered wife of a wealthy nobleman living in Foligno, near Assisi, a woman who scoffed at piety, who had given herself over to every extravagance of pleasure, underwent a dramatic conversion. After the death of her husband a few years later, she entered the Third Order of St. Francis, lived entirely on alms and devoted herself to prayer. She became a great mystic and a teacher whose writings received the Church's approval even during her lifetime. On her death, in 1309, she was popularly acclaimed as a saint and her cult was approved by Pope Innocent XII in 1693.

The story of Angela's spiritual odyssey between 1285 and 1296 is told in the *Memoriale*,¹ written by Brother Arnold, a Franciscan friar, one time chaplain to the Bishop of Foligno and her confessor. For although Angela could read Latin sufficiently well to follow the Breviary and the Missal, she could not write herself, even in the vernacular. Yet her intelligence was acute; she had a flair for analysing her own mental processes and she became extraordinarily sensitive to the light and shade of spiritual experience. Brother Arnold was a most conscientious scribe, who added nothing, embellished nothing, nearly always read his record over to her and tells us when he did not.² His testimony is the more valuable because for some years he viewed her with the greatest suspicion.

An understanding of the *Memoriale* is essential to any apprecia-

¹ As there is no reliable English text of Blessed Angela's works, this article is based on Fr. Paul Doncoeur's edition of the *Memoriale*, and other documents appended to it, published in Latin, and in a French translation, entitled *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno du Tiers Ordre de S. François* (Paris, 1926). In translating the passages quoted, both the French and Latin texts have been consulted, but the references throughout are to the French edition as being the more readily accessible.

² *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, edited by Fr. Paul Doncoeur, pp. 33, 48-9, 55 and 121.

tion of Angela's teaching, for she taught out of her own experience; all her advice to her followers is but an elaboration of what she herself had learned, first, after her conversion, from her sorrowful consideration of her sharp and sinful contact with the world's delights, then from penance, then from the Holy Spirit Himself, at work in her soul. It is this blend of hard-bitten shrewdness and supreme insight into the things of God that makes her so invaluable a teacher, specially for those who seek to pray and yet must live and work against the background of an almost pagan society. For though few of us will ever come to the heights of mystical prayer, most of us will recognise, mirrored in her great experiences, our own lesser ones, our moments of insight, strange apprehensions of truth and love, our so often grudging response to the touch of God's grace. Over and over again, we meet ourselves as we read Angela's pithy comments on herself and those others whom she advised. But she also gives us a picture of ourselves as we could be, of human nature sanctified and healed, of soul and body, heart and head brought into harmony because the will is at last one with God's will and so the whole personality is set free to fulfil itself in joyful love.

Angela expresses herself in the highly-coloured idiom of her times, so that many of the locutions and the visions, particularly the early ones of the Passion, shock our sophisticated susceptibilities. It is only too tempting to write them off as the imaginings of a neurotic woman who would to-day be given psychiatric treatment; or at best, as the pseudo-religious fantasies of a hypersensitive artistic temperament. But they have to be seen in the context of Angela's spiritual development, as manifestations of grace working in a soul, and serving to bring her not only to a life of heroic virtue and an extraordinary grasp of theological truths but to a direct experience of union with God.

Brother Arnold only gives a summary of the first stage of Angela's pilgrimage, for he did not begin to write until 1291, though he first came into contact with her in 1285, when her conscience was burdened with a sin so grievous that she had been unable to make a full confession of it. At last, tormented and hesitant, she prayed to St. Francis, and the next day she heard Brother Arnold preach and knew him at once for the confessor she sought.¹ Immediately her confession was made her attitude

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 32.

to life changed completely; she shunned the pleasures she had once loved; no penance was too hard for her, no humiliation too great. So began the slow and painful process by which Angela was detached from the world and became the penitent friend of God. Brother Arnold and Angela, using the traditional manner of describing spiritual experiences, divide this phase into various steps. "And you must understand," she says, "that at every step one hangs back; and it is with great sorrow and great heartbreak that with so slow and heavy a tread and with such pain the soul drags itself towards God. . . ."¹

Throughout this period, she was dominated on the one hand by an ever more acute knowledge of herself, a deeper and deeper consciousness of her sins, and on the other, by an ever more vivid realisation of the merciful love of God as revealed in the redeeming Passion of our Lord. In her loving contemplation of our Lord dying upon the Cross, she was made to understand in what pain He had died until she could say: "I felt that I—I myself—had crucified Him."² Then, standing before her crucifix, in a spontaneous gesture of love reminiscent of St. Francis himself, she stripped off her finery and offered herself to Christ without any reservation, vowing herself to chastity and penance, though she knew how difficult a penitential way of life would be in that household, where her feeble efforts at austerity made her the jest of her family and her friends.

Soon after this, possibly in some pestilence, her entire family died. She says herself that she sorrowed bitterly; and yet, since she realised that God required a complete surrender of all she held most dear, she rejoiced.³ For Angela was an all-or-nothing person, and her readiness to sacrifice every family tie, every friendship, every penny for love of God expressed her acceptance of, and readiness to co-operate with, His grace. She may well seem to us an extremist: and, unlike her, we tend to shun extremes lest we should be labelled neurotic. We cling to our idea of what is safe and normal, even at the risk of being mediocre. Angela's spirituality challenges our mediocrity: it is a salutary reminder that the recitation of conventional prayers before romanticised pictures of the Way of the Cross is a poor substitute for the hard,

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 33.

² *Ibid.*, 35.

³ *Ibid.*, 36. cf. p. 64.

clear thinking about the grim reality of the Passion by which Angela was brought to so great a love of God.

Yet even in an age which had no use for half-measures, she seemed to be going too far; for against the advice of her relatives and her spiritual advisers—including Brother Arnold who still had very little use for her—she began to sell all her possessions, until at last she had only one small estate left, a little place she loved so much that she could hardly bring herself to part with it. But at last, she sold even that, not merely as a just penance, but as the expression of her love of God. "Lord," she cried, "even if I be damned, yet will I do penance and give up my possessions and serve You."¹

Then indeed she began to find comfort; prayer was no effort; she would often forget to eat, so absorbed was she in her thought of God. She began to cry out whenever she heard the name of God, and her tears at the sight of a picture of the Passion seemed literally to scald her flesh. She was the talk of Foligno—but Brother Arnold was still suspicious.

When at last the business of disposing of her property was done, she set out with some companions on a pilgrimage to Assisi. On the way, at the junction of the road to Spello, she was suddenly inundated with God's love for her; she seemed to hear the Holy Spirit speak to her: "My daughter, my spouse, who art sweet to me, I love you more than any other woman in the valley. . . ."² Instinctively, she recoiled—as indeed do we. But there is a sense in which every soul is dear to God as is no other, just as there is a sense in which the mother of many children may say to each with perfect truth: "Darling, I love you best,"—that is, my love for you is unique. At this first assurance of God's unique love for her, Angela's reaction was a most wholesome mistrust of her imagination. But she was made to understand that the Holy Trinity had indeed come to her soul, and that the sense of God's loving presence would remain with her that day until she had visited the Church at Assisi a second time. In fact, when she did re-enter the Church after the midday meal, the presence left her, whereupon she cried out: "Oh unknown love, why, oh why, do you leave me? Why?"³

This outburst brought the friars running from the cloister—

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 41.

² *Ibid.*, 60.

³ *Ibid.*, 63.

among them Brother Arnold. He was shocked and embarrassed, furious with his penitent for making herself so conspicuous. With the utmost reluctance, he decided that on his next visit to Foligno, he must see her and enquire into her experiences, to see whether they were of God, or, as he then thought, of the devil. As much to her surprise as to his, he became convinced that God required him to take down every word she said.

The experience on the road to Assisi marked a turning-point for Angela, for now, she was not merely a suppliant penitent; she was the penitent friend of God. Her soul no longer "dragged itself" towards Him, for as the Gifts of the Spirit came into flower in her soul, Angela lost the initiative and the Holy Ghost Himself took charge.

Yet at first, she sought more than anything else the assurance that she was loved and that her experiences of God's amazing love for her were valid. It seemed to her that with the eyes of the soul, she saw His eyes on her. But she longed for some sign, some physical sign, which would show that she was not deceived. And the voice said: "Behold the sign I will leave with your soul . . . I will leave you so great a love of Me that your soul will always burn with it." After this "anointing of the soul," she says: "He left me this sign which is always with me so that I know this is the straight way of salvation, to love and to wish to suffer for one's love."¹

Now, as she meditated upon the great doctrines of the faith, her mind was illuminated by the gift of understanding. She came more and more to penetrate behind the dry husk of dogma and to know these doctrines as a living truth. What the theologian expresses in carefully balanced and accurate phrases, she learned to express in terms of a personal experience. So she was brought to an ever clearer understanding of the Blessed Trinity and of the Incarnation and the hypostatic union. Once, after meditating on the Passion, she had a vision of Christ, of which she says: "I understood that this extreme beauty sprang from His divinity and that through the medium of His beauty I saw His divinity."

At this time, Brother Arnold pursued Angela with questions, sometimes about her experiences, sometimes about doctrine, sometimes about matters concerning his Order. So did others. All these things she referred to God in prayer; and it happened

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 74-6.

that on one occasion, when she felt it was mere pride and folly to ask for enlightenment on certain questions, her soul was lifted up and she saw the Divine Wisdom "as it were a table without beginning or end." The word table, she says, was left in her mind, for of the feast, the abundance of Divine Wisdom itself, she could tell nothing. Yet from that time, she could judge all spiritual people and all spiritual matters with understanding. "I no longer judge erroneously as I used to do, but with quite another and true judgment which I understand. . . ."¹

But before this phase was over, she entered upon a period of trial which Brother Arnold calls a revelation of her own unworthiness and her re-fashioning at the hands of God. Darkness and light alternated, so that at one moment she saw the Divine Power with the eyes of the soul and cried out: "The world is great with God."² Then for several weeks she could not feel the presence of God at all; she was black with a sense of sin and all her fears of being deluded returned. In her desolation, she meditated continually upon the Passion until at last she could say: "All my joy now is in the God Man who suffers."³

Shortly after this, when Brother Arnold spoke to her of the mystery of evil, Angela said that she had been considering this very matter, and had been drawn up to a height of prayer "which is quite beyond our natural powers." She saw the Power and the Will of God as if she had been brought through darkness into light.⁴ At this point, probably in the autumn of 1293, Brother Arnold was forbidden by his superiors to have anything to do with Angela, for the hours he spent in the Church, writing at her side in full view of the public, were giving scandal. So he sent a little boy to take down what she said in the vernacular, and later he translated into Latin the record of the revelations made to her when she was meditating upon the Passion. She seemed, she says, to enter into the mind of Christ and to feel His sufferings with an intensity of which she had never before been capable; she speaks of herself as being transformed into very great suffering and adds: "And then the Sovereign Good gave me this great grace that of two things He made one, for I cannot any more will otherwise than as He wills."⁵

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 102-3.

² *Ibid.*, 106.

³ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 118-9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

This marked another turning point; Angela was no longer concerned with being loved; her whole personality was concentrated upon that perfect act of charity which is to love. Her visions, too, change; they seem to by-pass her imagination and to be entirely in her intellect. She saw nothing that she could describe, but as she looked upon God, she was entirely absorbed in that looking; and in the great light in which she understood the infinite abundance of the divine Goodness, her soul knew neither joy nor tears.¹ But in 1294, acute suffering was interwoven with her joy. Brother Arnold, now permitted to work with her again, says briskly that he did not trouble to take down all she told him about her trials, but she seems not only to have endured extreme physical pain, but also to have been on fire with temptation, to have known within herself the flare up of all her old vices and many others which were new. In her own simile, her soul felt like a man hanging by the neck from a gallows with his hands tied and his eyes bound, who, so hanging, yet lives, knowing no comfort, no support, no help. She herself said later that she recognised these trials as a necessary purification, a final cutting out of pride.²

Indeed, before this period of desolation was over, Angela was drawn up into that darkness in which she saw the Godhead. She speaks, in the paradox of the mystic, of the abyss of this height.³ Brother Arnold would have nothing of this dark seeing, it was beyond him. But Angela was now completely sure of herself.

"These things cannot be told [she says], but they bring great joy. But when God is seen in this way, in the darkness, no smile comes to the lips, nor any feeling of devotion to the heart, nor fervour, nor burning of love. The soul sees nothing, yet sees All. And the body sleeps and the tongue is silenced. And all the endearments He used to me and all the words He spoke to me and all you have written . . . is so much less than the Sovereign Good I see with so much darkness that I do not set my hope in them . . . for it is most surely set in this Sovereign Good which I see in such great darkness."⁴

In this dark seeing of the Blessed Trinity, she did not think upon anything corporeal, not even of God made Man. But when she was withdrawn from the darkness and set apart from it, then she saw

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 131, 137-8.

² *Ibid.*, 148.

³ *Ibid.*, 171-3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

God made Man, "through Whose eyes and through Whose countenance shines forth that which I saw in the darkness . . ."¹

Brother Arnold's account ends here, in 1296; with Angela's permission he showed the book to two other friars minor, and in the course of time it was approved by a commission of scholars.

But Angela lived and taught for another thirteen years, and other scribes took down her words.² She was no longer much concerned with her own visions; the few which are recorded seem to have been given her less for her own consolation than for that of her growing family of spiritual children. She longed that they too might receive the assurance of God's unique love for which she had once hungered.

She made no attempt to organise her family. Many of her children were Franciscans, whether regulars or tertiaries. But we get glimpses in her letters of men and women much involved in worldly affairs, of others who lived a life of poverty like her own. She tried to give them, not any one method of prayer, or rule of life, but a certain basic formation which would bring them to so great a love of God that they might, if God willed, be led to the same height of supernatural prayer.

Though the style of the thirty-five letters, instructions and odd notes appended to the *Memoriale* varies almost from document to document, the essence of her teaching does not. One theme constantly recurs: If a man would seek God, he must know God and himself. Angela is almost classically Thomist in her insistence that the will follows the intellect. "As we see, so we love."³ "The more excellently we see, the more excellently we love."⁴

So the first step which the soul must take if she would come to God is that she should truly know God. ". . For the soul, knowing God truly, knows Him to be good—and not merely to be good, but to be the Sovereign and Perfect Good. And finding Him good, she loves Him for His goodness and loving Him, desires Him and desiring Him, gives all she has in order to possess Him."⁵

"What is the use of contemplation," she says, "if a man has not this right and true understanding of God and himself?"⁶ "Understanding must come first and then love will follow."⁷

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 161.

² These are the documents given in Parts II and III of Fr. Doncoeur's edition.

³ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 203.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 273.

In another letter, she says: "To know God presupposes a knowledge of self, in this way: a man must consider well against Whom he sins and then consider well and understand who he is who thus sins. . ."¹ This is the true self-noughting, to know oneself incapable of any good. This clear-sighted view of self enables a man to realise the supreme goodness of God Who humbled Himself and stooped over man's nothingness. So,

with the help of grace a man begins to come to a knowledge of God. And the more he knows, the more he loves. And the more he loves, the more ardently he desires to possess that which he loves and the more ardently he desires to possess what he loves, the more ardently does he strive after it and this striving is the sign and measure of his love. For by this one may know if love is pure and true and upright, if a man loves and strives after that which his Beloved loved and does those things which his Beloved did.²

If a man would learn to do this, he must study in the Book of Life, which is Christ, Whose life was all poverty, humility, suffering, lowliness and true obedience.

The supreme purpose of all Angela's teaching was to show her children the merciful love of God, so that they might learn to love God, through Christ, and to love all creation because it is His. "Our Creator, God Incarnate, Sovereign and Perfect Good, is all love. . ."³ "Oh Lord, make me worthy to understand the depth of the most high charity which You showed in this Your most holy incarnation."⁴ "Oh little children of God, look with all your might upon this martyred God Man and do not turn your backs upon Him Who has so greatly loved you."⁵

Angela must have known intimately every grade of love from the most profane to the most sacred. She is able not only to dissect the workings of the human heart as it plunges about in its desperate attempts to love, but to give us a most exquisite picture of Divine Charity in the soul. She is never sentimental about love: she knows precisely what she means by it; it is that stretching forth of the will towards the Beloved in an ardent desire to be in some measure identified with the Beloved. Over and over again, she speaks of this identification of the lover and the beloved, this transformation of the lover into the will of his beloved. As the

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 226.

² *Ibid.*, 226.

³ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 341.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 306.

human lover and his beloved are rightly of one heart and one mind, so the soul in love with God longs to be identified with the will of God, to be of one heart and mind with Him.¹

It is with this transformation of the whole personality by the love of God that Angela is concerned, whether she is writing about poverty and humility, about love or about prayer. And though she writes about them all in the context of her own experience of contemplative prayer, she never contrasts the active and the contemplative life, or commends the one at the expense of the other, nor does she ever suggest that they are incompatible. The whole personality is to be transfigured into the personality of Christ; she herself offered herself to Him without reserve, not only head and heart, but hands and feet. Writing of Christ as the Way, she says: "By this Way must go hand and arm and shoulder, foot and leg and every part of the body."² It is a total self-giving.

Her own absolute surrender is expressed in the many passages in which she speaks of being taken out of herself, lifted up, identified with the suffering of Christ. But it is equally clearly expressed in the account she gives of how she and her companion set out one Maundy Thursday to seek Christ in His poor and found Him there indeed. With a gesture that echoes the kiss of St. Francis for the leper, she, so little time before a fastidious and spoiled woman, drank the filthy water in which she had washed the lepers' feet and felt that she had received Christ.³

Angela herself never sought a completely solitary life, nor was she ever inaccessible. She was not of the world, but she lived right down in the mess and muddle of it. She went about the countryside, she did the household chores. Once indeed, when she was washing lettuces, a voice, which she judged to be of the devil, asked her if such a task was worthy of her—implying no doubt that she should have been set apart for better things; she immediately replied that she was only fit to cart dung—and went on washing lettuces.⁴ "Speaking or eating or doing any other kind of thing never prevented her from being lifted up in soul and spirit,"⁵ remarks Brother Arnold, though he adds that she was often very absent-minded.

"It is good," she wrote to one of her followers, "that with all the fervour given you by grace, you should pray and keep vigil

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 299, 207.

² *Ibid.*, 282.

³ *Ibid.*, 94-6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

and do all other good works. . . . But if this grace of fervour be withdrawn, strive still to pray, still to keep vigil, still to expend yourself on all good works.”¹ But works should never separate the soul from God, for the soul should never be given over to them: “. . . never give yourselves or even lend yourselves to any creature, but give yourselves to Him Who is,” she wrote. “And when one of you preaches or hears confessions or gives advice, let his spirit not be set upon these things, but let it be with the Creator.”² Speaking of herself to Brother Arnold, she says:

“Though I feel joy and sorrow, somewhat, outwardly, yet I feel them but little within, for in my soul there is a cell into which neither joy nor sorrow may enter, nor any delight in any virtue, nor delight in anything which can be named, for there is the Sovereign Good than which there is no other good.”³

She kept this solitude of heart most jealously and was concerned that her children should keep it also, whether they lived in the world, or in the cloister. For, she points out, “Our Lord did not say: Learn of Me to despise the world and live in poverty . . . but only this: Learn of Me for I am gentle and lowly of heart.”⁴

Humility, she insists, is the matrix of all the virtues. “One of the signs by which a man may know that he is in a state of grace is this—that he is never puffed up.”⁵ And poverty, she teaches, is the root of humility. For absolute poverty, material and spiritual, means so absolute a dependence upon God that all self-confidence is taken away.⁶ But though she herself clung to the ideals of St. Francis and believed that absolute material poverty was the ideal way of life, she also knew that it was not possible for all. So she did not insist that her disciples should follow her example and sell up their possessions—but she did insist that they must learn not to have the slightest concern over wealth or worldly honours. In any case, strict material poverty is but the first stage of the three-fold poverty she commended. Merely to be poor in this world’s goods is not enough: our Lord made Himself “poor in friends.” So the soul which gives itself totally to Him will strip itself of all human relationships which may hinder its progress in the love of God. And finally, just as our Lord “emptied Himself” of all His

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 252.

² *Ibid.*, 300.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 195.

³ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

power, His glory and His wisdom, so the soul must strip itself of all confidence in its own gifts, of all self-reliance, of all spiritual consolations.¹ But just as knowledge leads the heart to love—and has no value unless love accompanies it—so this three-fold poverty, this complete detachment, not only prepares the heart for love but is an expression of love. It was not for nothing that Angela saw in a vision Divine Love “as it were a scythe,”² or that she speaks of human love cutting deeply into the heart. For human love, however legitimate, however noble, even when it is directed towards God, is so easily warped; and once warped, it is dangerous for it works the soul’s destruction more surely than anything else.³ And Divine Love, “as it were a scythe” is dangerous to the self, for it threatens the sovereignty of the self in its self-regarding loves.

As Angela saw it, the whole purpose of the spiritual disciplines is not to adorn the soul with virtues but to lay the self open to the scythe of Divine Love, so that through the operation of this love, the little loving human soul may be severed from all lesser affections and so set free to be transformed into the Divine Love which is its Beloved; and being so transformed, may love all creation because God himself has taught it how to love.

But when we first come to the point at which we say we long for God, we may not be entirely sincere, for we are not yet able truly to want God: body and soul may not be completely at one with each other, and so the will is divided.⁴ Angela speaks in one letter of the many who say they love our Lord, but flinch from the poverty and pain which would bring them nearer to Him, indeed, spend their time praying that they may be delivered from such things, are racked with anxiety lest they should not escape them.⁵ This is one of the many passages in which we meet ourselves. For few of us ever know that absolute integrity which Angela describes when she says:

“But when all the members of the body are in unison with the soul and the soul is so much at one with the heart and the whole body that she can answer for them, then the soul is truly able to desire God. But this will to desire God is given by grace.”⁶

Angela considers that this transformation or divinisation of the

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 277.

² *Ibid.*, 126. ³ *Ibid.*, 311 sq. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 136 and 142.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 279.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

soul comes about in three stages which correspond to the three main phases of her own experience. In the first, the soul is inspired by grace to strive to love what Christ loved and to do as He did, as Angela herself was inspired after her conversion. Next, the will is united with the will of God, as Angela's was after the great vision of the Passion; and the soul receives a wonderful insight into the ways of God and is given great consolations; and these things can be expressed after a fashion. But in the third stage, the soul is transformed by a yet more perfect union, the soul in God, God in the soul; and what she then perceives cannot be expressed at all.¹ Angela says with beautiful accuracy that when the soul is thus transformed, "her own substance is not changed, but her life is changed into God by love and by love becomes as it were divine."²

In the first phase, the attempt to imitate Christ is not sufficient to safeguard the human heart; for we have not yet been given that complete integration of body and soul, heart and mind, in which we can truly desire God alone. And so our natural affections may still lead us astray; we may even go astray in spiritual matters, for we may desire virtue for the wrong reasons and our very love of God may have an element of self-seeking in it.³ But in the second stage, the will is so intimately united with God's will that the heart cannot stray. And in the third stage, grace infuses into the soul a certain wisdom, so that the soul knows how to love God and how to love His creatures.

"That most excellent and pure love is that in which the soul is drawn out and led to the vision of God . . . and she sees that every creature has its being from Him who is Being . . . and from this sight she draws an ineffable wisdom, an unshakable wisdom, a mature wisdom. . . . For in truth this Sovereign Being teaches us to love all which has being from His Being . . . and He teaches us to love rational creatures . . . specially those who are loved and cherished by this Sovereign Being. . . . And [the soul] learns and knows how to love creatures fittingly, either more or less, according to the dispositions of this Sovereign Being and in nothing does she exceed the due measure."⁴

It was with this love which is the perfect act of charity that Angela loved God and her children. She wrote tenderly to them;

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 299, 312-3.

² *Ibid.*, 272.

³ *Ibid.*, 313.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 322-3.

she made their sorrows hers, their joys hers. She was free to love them so spontaneously, so joyously, so warm-heartedly, precisely because of her complete detachment, her single-minded, single-hearted love of God. Writing to one of her children with the utmost affection, she could yet say: "My heart is His and His heart mine."¹ For she had been given that vision of the Godhead "which leaves in the soul that uncreated Love and the soul can do nothing . . . but that Love does all . . . Love Himself does all the works of Love."²

If her followers would be brought to this vision of the naked Godhead, then they must be fervent and constant in prayer. "If you would make progress, pray. . . . But if you can come to the summit of perfection and would be enlightened yet more so that you may be established there, pray. . . ."³ Prayer, she says, is where God is found. Though she distinguishes three schools of prayer, bodily, mental and supernatural, she sees all of them in the context of her own all-embracing contemplative prayer. Bodily prayer is the prayer of words and gestures disposing the whole personality, body and soul, mind and heart, to the worship of God. It is a fundamental discipline and one she never abandoned, for there is no short cut to the higher states of prayer. In fact, she laid great stress upon the saying of the Divine Office at the appropriate times and she begged her followers not to scurry through their prayers to get a certain number said, "like little women bustling about doing tasks on piece-rates." They were to attend to what they said, to consider well; for from such consideration, they would come to mental prayer, in which the mind is so entirely occupied with God and in God (*circa Deum et in Deo*) that it cannot attend to anything else. This prayer "stills the tongue for it is not possible to speak." Yet what the soul learns in this state of attention to God can be expressed, is not totally beyond its understanding. It seems clear from her description that the soul is actively occupied, either in keeping the mind fixed on God, or at least in denying entrance to all extraneous thoughts. But, as Angela suggests, the content of the prayer is divinely given—the mind is "full of God" Who stoops to "occupy" the soul. This is the state of perfect mental prayer, from which the soul is raised up (*elevatur*) or drawn up (*trahitur*) into supernatural

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 253.

² *Ibid.*, 324.

³ *Ibid.*, 191.

prayer, in which the natural powers of the soul are not sustained, but entirely suspended; the soul begins to experience supernaturally.¹

Angela repeatedly and most emphatically insists that supernatural prayer is not mental prayer raised to a higher degree. It is totally different. It is not something we can do or even begin to do. Angela says that she could not will it, desire it or ask for it.² She speaks of being led by God, dominated by God, seized by God. For this is not something the soul does, it is something God does to the soul. "The soul is drawn up above what is natural to it, and by the supernatural light of understanding, the soul understands more of God than is proper to human nature . . . and the soul knows that she can never fully understand; and what she does understand, she cannot express, for all that she perceives and apprehends is beyond her nature."³ "The soul is rejoiced in this Sovereign Good; and she sees nothing that can afterwards be expressed in words or even savoured in the heart."⁴

These three main stages of the same contemplative prayer seem to correspond to the three main stages of Angela's own development, to the three-fold povertyes, and to the three stages of the soul's transformation or divinisation. The first goes with the twenty-one steps which Brother Arnold summarises in the *Memoriale*, with contrition, penance, self-knowledge, with the active attempt to imitate Christ, to love what He loved, to do as He did. The second seems to correspond to the next period, after Angela's experience of God's unique love for her on the way to Assisi; in this period of friendship with God, she would be "occupied" with the thought of God not just for hours, but for days at a time. It is the period of the locutions and some of the great imaginative visions; it is a period when in fact she was "poor in friendships," and the climax is reached when her will is united with God's will, and "of two things He made one."

The highest degree of supernatural prayer seems to correspond with what Brother Arnold called the seventh step, in which Angela was made to experience the great darkness—that darkness in which the soul is so completely dazzled by the light of the Godhead that it cannot see at all. "You will come then," she says

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 221-2.

² *Ibid.*, 177.

³ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

to a follower, "to the fullness of light—for you will understand that you cannot understand."¹

In each main stage, there are many degrees and variations, though Angela makes no methodical attempt to analyse or grade them. A higher state of prayer seems often to have been anticipated, glimpsed, as it were, though but briefly, in what she reckoned a lower stage of development. In fact, the stages really only stress the fact that a point has been reached in which the soul is now more habitually in one sort of prayer than in another. For instance, very early on, she tells how in saying the *Pater noster* her mind was illuminated, and she began to taste somewhat of the divine sweetness.² And even before the union of her will with God's will, she had the "sight" of the Divine Wisdom, which marked the beginning of those intellectual visions, although these were not habitual till much later.

She herself says that when the soul is first united with the will of God, this union is not perfect and not continuous, and therefore the soul is always striving towards a more complete conformity with Christ, so that it may be more pleasing to God and more apt to be perfectly united with Him.³ She speaks of a supreme experience of God which—at any rate up to about 1296—she had known only three times.⁴ Yet later, she speaks of an experience of God, supreme and inexpressible, which she had known not once, not a hundred, but more than a thousand thousand times, and that not just for the space of a flutter of an eyelid, but in a less marvellous way, almost continuously.⁵

Yet to those who consulted her about prayer and were perhaps dejected because they did not receive any extraordinary graces, Angela said, quite simply: "Be content to do your part: God will do His."⁶ And she adds:

"Let the soul know that this good Saviour of ours is better pleased with the services of a poor man who serves faithfully, without benefit or reward, than He is with the services of a rich man, who receives great rewards every day.... So the soul which God enriches with great consolations and which runs to Him in love, is not to be commended so much as that soul which runs to God and serves God

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 196.

² *Ibid.*, 41.

³ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 177-8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 253.

with a like great love, without any reward or comfort but in continual suffering. It seems to me that it is the divine light which comes from the life of Christ which shows me this, for He is the Way by which we must go through love, to God and in God.”¹

¹ *Le Livre de la Bienheureuse Soeur Angèle de Foligno*, 282.

EDWIN MUIR

By

DEREK STANFORD

EDWIN MUIR, who died on 4 January, at the age of seventy-one, was a poet and critic of unusual order. Two years ago, he had acted as Visiting Professor of Poetry at Harvard, but though he had been honoured by several universities his disposition was not academic. As a critic, he illustrates Berdyaev's famous distinction between “culture” and “civilisation.” According to the Russian thinker, the former appertains to “the good life,” the highest virtue of which is wisdom, while the latter refers to scientific living whose cardinal goodness is conceived of as knowledge. In the West, we are confronted with two formidable obstacles to wisdom. The first, rooted in and deriving from democratic education, consists in “knowing less and less about more and more”; while the second, spoken of as specialisation, inverts the process and entails “knowing more and more about less and less.” Translated to the plane of literary criticism, these procedures of thought and study result in two lop-sided approaches. From the democratic diffusion of knowledge, wide but superficial as to depth, is developed the tendency towards *propaganda*, which consists of a simplification of the facts involved in an issue and a presentation of them to serve an immediate “activist” end. On the other hand, from specialisation, there emerges the fashion of treating art and letters as the proper

exclusive confines of the scholar. This imitation of the method, and methodology, of science by one of the older humane disciplines constitutes a new *pedanticism*. Both of these pervert appreciation, since both look upon literature as something which, primarily, it is not. The first "socialises" it; while the second renders it impersonal. As Walter Bagehot once so well remarked, the words of Shakespeare were written by a man and not by a steam-engine.

By avoiding these fallacious approaches, Muir in his life-time won for himself a singular position as a critic. To him, books and ideas were so many stations on a pilgrim's way. He was looking for the light of wisdom rather than for accumulation, or manipulation, of knowledge. Wisdom, then, which is always reducing issues and details in the way that knowledge goes on multiplying them, was the economic virtue which Muir pursued. His search was for a basic truth or good or beauty, and the slant of his mind inclined him always to seek for the root, not the shoots, of any question. It was, no doubt, this personal quest which gave him his critical independence, his freedom from the trammels of contemporary fashion, his style which was that of a pure but still small voice. In this he differed from John Middleton Murry, a critic who took his self-discoveries to constitute a pattern of messianic truth. "He who is truly humble," Muir had written in his first book, "conceals even his humility." Murry's deep insight into our times was often muddled by his impatience to propose an immediate programme of action. Muir, however, was content to leave his intuitions as facts of expression on the contemplative level.

The search for a solution, or meaning, to existence, which this author undertook, clearly derived from his early distresses. Uprooted in his early boyhood years from a pastoral landscape in the Orkney isles, off Scotland, he found himself living, or bitterly enduring, as a poor clerk in the bleaker parts of Glasgow. Following upon this removal, many members of his family died, and he himself fell ill, a traumatic experience he has described in *An Autobiography* (1954). In his brilliant travelogue, *Scottish Journey* (1935), Muir speaks of his arrival in Scotland's largest industrial city. Coming straight from the Orkneys, he remarks that he "had no self-protective apparatus for selecting [his] impressions, and was stunned by a succession of sights which

[he] frantically strove not to see. The main problem which puzzled [him] at that time was how all these people could live in such places without feeling ashamed." Industrialism, for Muir, as it stood in the mid-'thirties (a period of great malnutrition and depression) seemed a system which forced people "to gather money out of the dirt." The daily atmosphere of Glasgow, to a boy fresh from marine and rural air, came in itself as a horror and surprise.

The refuse that one finds scattered in the streets of an industrial town [wrote Muir] has always seemed to me to tell a great deal about it, and to be in a humble way a synopsis of its life. One finds there a miscellaneous and yet representative collection which is very revealing, though it can have little resemblance to the franker contents of medieval or Renaissance streets. Scraps of newspaper, cigarette ends, rims of bowler hats, car tickets, orange peel, boot soles, chocolate paper, fish-and-chip paper, sixpences, broken bottles, pawn tickets, and various human excretions; these several things, clean and dirty, liquid and solid, make up a sort of pudding or soup which is an image of the life of an industrial town. To this soup must be added an ubiquitous dry synthetic dust, the siftings of the factories, which is capable under rain of turning into a greasy paste resembling mud, but has no other likeness to the natural mire of a country road; for that, however unpleasant underneath one's feet, breathes freshness and has a sweet smell. Sometimes this compost is thickened still more by a brown fog permeated by the manufactured dirt, with a smell which is neither clean nor obnoxious but is simply the generalised smell of factories. In this soup it is considered a perfectly natural thing for human beings to live.

But this daily comparison of the Glasgow street-scene with the Orkney landscape was nothing to the nightmare degradation partly concealed by the walls of rotting slums. To hear of the conditions obtaining within them was as much as Muir could endure.

I have been told [he writes] of slum courts so narrow that the refuse flung into them mounted and mounted in the course of years until it blocked all the house windows up to the second-top storey; and I have been given an idea of the stench rising from this rotting, half liquid mass which I shall not reproduce here. I have been told of choked stair-head lavatories with the filth from them running

down the stairs; of huge midnight migrations of rats from one block to another; and of bugs crawling down the windows of tram-cars All these things, I have been assured, are true, and no doubt they are.

Pity, indignation, disgust, and shame are powerful agents of self-destruction when they are helpless and cannot be effectively trained on their rightful object. Muir's socio-political reactions, to these revelations led him to join the Trades Union Movement and to become a Socialist. But such steps proved inadequate to protect and inspirit his sensitive psyche from the depressive burden of his knowledge; and for this he turned to the writings of Nietzsche with their giddy bracing teaching of Dionysian pride. This philosophy, as he well knew, did not accord with his socialist faith, but it has something which he required on a purely psychological level. The first-fruits of this attitude are to be found in *We Moderns* (1918), a collection of "enigmas and guesses" contributed to *The New Age* under the pseudonym of Edward Moore. Style, here, even as thought, is influenced by Nietzsche's aphoristic art. Later, its author was to describe this composition as "a sort of pinchbeck Nietzschean prose peppered with exclamation marks." Extravagance of expression must be conceded, yet none the less *We Moderns* remains a remarkable "young man's" first book. As following in its master's footsteps, religion naturally gets lambasted. Stoical pessimism is held to be deficient, and only a countenance of "tragic affirmation" is described as appropriate to human dignity. It is not enough for man to endure his destiny; he must, for all his pains, assentingly *enjoy* it.

Muir's intoxication with the Dionysian, by means of which he preserved his spirits in the face of adversity, had subsided by 1924 when his book of essays *Latitudes* was published. Here, in *A Note on Friedrich Nietzsche*, Muir distinguished between the wheat and tares in that great thinker. In this "second view" of his subject, Muir is now the critic, detached though sympathetic; no longer the first lieutenant in that hierophant's tragic chorus.

From this time onwards, Muir was advancing to a re-acceptance of Christian values. In *Essays on Literature and Society* (1949), he concerned himself with various modern trends which devalue the moral status of man. For example, he attacked the philosophic historicism of Oswald Spengler, in that it allows the individual little moral significance or choice within the cyclic process of

waxing-waning cultures. This "biological" manner of thinking, he likewise discovers in creative literature. Along with Denis Saurat, he notes that "the classical writers of the seventeenth century exalted reason, the Romantics of the nineteenth century emotion, and certain contemporary writers sensation." The biological base of human life is not, however, its Highest Common Denominator. It is its Lowest; and, as such, offers no sufficient guide for conduct.

But this brief recital of his return to values ultimately rooted in religion needs to be supplemented by some account of his imaginative journey back. Muir's intellectual itinerary must be read in conjunction with a record of his creative advance.

Years after leaving the Orkney Islands, he described their tenor of existence as "the only desirable form of life that I found in all my journey through Scotland." Coming from this modest earthly paradise to Glasgow, that No-Man's Land of a city, he could not avoid drawing the glaring comparison, and in his verse he was later to point the contrast with memorable distinction:

My childhood all a myth
Enacted in a distant isle. . . .

My youth a tragi-comedy,
Ridiculous war of dreams and shames. . . .

Myth and dream remained two terms of permanent significance for Muir. By our use of the first, we relate ourselves to our essential image. This myth-process Muir sometimes speaks of as "the Fable," observing that "no autobiography can confine itself to conscious life. . . . In themselves our conscious lives may not be particularly interesting. But what we are and can never be, our fable, seems to me to be inconceivably interesting. I should like to write that fable, but I cannot even live it, and all I could do if I related the outward course of my life would be to show how far I have deviated from it." The myth or fable, then, presents man with a rounded image of his own ego. By means of it he is able to imagine his potentialities realised; and this imagining, in turn, acts as a spur or magnet to his fuller development. As distinguished from this, there exists the dream, in which a person's subconscious forces, his primitive memories, are shadowed forth. Both of these psychic instruments are at

work in Muir's poetry. Ideal or exemplary images of human life are beautifully present in his poem *The Labyrinth* where, somewhat in the manner of Hölderlin's Romantic Hellenism, Muir has a vision of the gods (whose "eternal dialogue was peace"),

Each sitting on the top of his mountain isle
While down below the little ships sailed by,
Toy multitudes swarmed in the harbour, shepherds drove
Their tiny flocks to the pastures, marriage feasts
Went on below, small birthdays and holidays,
Ploughing and harvesting and life and death,
And all permissible, all acceptable,
Clear and secure as in a limpid dream.

It is, of course, easy to relate this vision to Muir's prose account of the Orkneys. "They are," he writes of the island farms, "very pleasant, easily worked, and profitable places. . . . Unemployment is virtually unknown, and the result is an alive and contented humanity." This is the socio-economic base from which the vision of the poem has flowered. Elsewhere, Muir offers aesthetic observations which likewise, we feel, underlie the poem: "If he [the visitor to the Orkneys] has an eye for such things, he will be delighted by the spectacle of the quickly changing skies and the clearness and brightness of all the colours." If it seems that these humble hints as to an image of "the good life" are not exotic or extraordinary enough, it must be remembered that classical beauty is simple and economic in all its features. Looked at, indeed, from a classical view-point, beauty appears as the purest reduction of the most essential detail and form.

To this deep-felt Arcadianism, delectable as a pastoral scene by Calvert, we must oppose the poet's report of ugliness and wrong in man and nature. The two poems in the chapter on Glasgow illustrate Muir's horror of industrial life as developed under capitalism. But the best of his "sinister" poems deal with the internal struggle in the buried amphitheatre of the mind. Thus, in *The Combat*, two ill-matched fabulous animals engage in an all-but-mortal battle, to which they return time and again. This terrible duel "beneath the secret skies" in which "the killing beast that cannot kill"

Swell and swells in his fury till
You might well think it was despair,

displays a dialectic of diametric forces as distinct from the harmony, the equilibrium, of the idyll first quoted.

Passages in *An Autobiography* offer likely material on the literal- and dream-base of this poem. From the same book, we learn, too, of Muir's experience under psycho-analytical treatment in London; and *The Combat* is probably best interpreted, in Jungian terms, as the unending contest between the male and female principle within the individual—as the war of the *animus* and the *anima*.

From Muir's experience with his analyst, he moved also two stages nearer to a religious view of life. In *An Autobiography*, he notes how the exposition of his dreams, as so many peep-shows of fear and hate and lust, led him to form a new picture of mankind.

At last [he confessed] I reached a state which resembled conviction of sin, though formulated in different terms. I realised the elementary fact that every one, like myself, was troubled by sensual desires and thoughts, by unacknowledged failures and frustrations causing self-hatred and hatred of others, by dead memories of shame and grief which had been shovelled underground long since because they could not be borne. I saw that my lot was the human lot, that when I faced my own unvarnished likeness I was one among all men and women, all of whom had the same desires and thoughts, the same failures and frustrations, the same unacknowledged hatred of themselves and others, the same hidden shames and griefs, and that if they confronted these things they would win a certain liberation from them. It was really a conviction of sin, but even more a realisation of Original Sin. It took a long time to crystallize.

Mental analysis unlocked for Muir the barred gates of his dream-life. Hitherto, he writes, "I had not dreamed for a long time; I had lain like Heine's dead man every night in a blank nonentity, and no ghostly hand had knocked on my grave. Now dreams began to come in crowds; every night I had more of them."

This loosening of the sluice-gates of the unconscious resulted, likewise, in a spate of day-time, half-waking, half-sleeping trances which presented, in a sequence of fantasies, what Muir's analyst, later on, described as a "myth of the creation." The analyst believed that the patient's "racial unconscious" was dangerously exposed and thought that analytical probing should be halted. Muir "tentatively suggested that [the dream] seemed to

point to immortality." The analyst retorted by elucidating its symbolism in a sexual light. Yet Muir was not wholly convinced by this "orthodox" explanation. "These things," he reflected, "though obvious enough, did not seem applicable to the dream, which was unearthly, or rather inhuman, and so in a sense unsexual."

A faith in immortality, an existential sense of Original Sin, are the key-stones of many religious systems. The consummation of Muir's own quest (related in his autobiography) occurred in 1939. There, he recalls how he returned from a hospital visit to his wife, recovering from a serious illness, and found himself reciting the Lord's Prayer "in a loud emphatic voice." "Now I realised," he wrote, "that, quite without knowing it, I was a Christian, no matter how bad a one."

Muir's open recognition of faith seems to have acted as a yeast to his poetic production. His best verse now began to appear; and his volume *The Voyage* (1946) was followed by his *Collected Poems* which was awarded the Foyle Poetry Prize for 1952. Plato's teaching that all true knowledge (or wisdom, one had better say here) is a matter of recollection or remembrance is superbly illustrated in a poem by this individually Christian author. In *A Birthday*, Muir writes how

Acceptance, gratitude;
The first look and the last
When all between has passed
Restore ingenuous good
That seeks no personal end,
Nor strives to mar or mend.
Before I touched the food
Sweetness ensnared my tongue;
Before I saw the wood
I loved each nook and bend,
The track going right and wrong;
Before I took the road
Direction ravished my soul.
Now that I can discern
It whole or almost whole,
Acceptance and gratitude
Like travellers return
And stood where first they stood.

One may compare such a piece, as to viability, with W. B. Yeats's more famous lines from *A Dialogue on Self and Soul*:

I am content to live it all again
And yet again, if it be life to pitch
Into the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch
A blind man battering blind men.

The touch of braggadocio in the latter, with its Nietzschean *amor fati* elevated into song, may look like a strained sort of wisdom beside the serenity of Muir. It is possible that the latter poet's deeper acquaintance with the philosopher's notion of "eternal recurrence" set a controlling limit to his thought. Immortality, in general, is one thing; and reincarnation a specific form of what, one supposes, most men hope for. But recapitulation, stark and simple, such as Yeats and Nietzsche praise may be thought a barren egoistic assertion—a fatalism masking desperate pride. It is true that, under the spell of the German, Muir had argued in his first book, with an eye to the Dionysian reader: "Looking back. . . . over your life, you find that precisely what you cannot do is to repent—least of all of your sins and griefs! For to repent is to will Life to be other than Life, and essentially not to affirm." But it is *remorse* not *repentance* which occupies itself in this obsessive manner. The religious man seeks to redeem the past—by expiation, not by vain regrets. He confronts his sin and accepts his penance. "Acceptance" comes first, and "gratitude" follows, as Muir was later to bear witness in his poem. Yet even in his early "non-religious" phase, the second of these two great terms found a place. "Better not live at all than live without reverence and gratitude!" he wrote. "Let our sacramental attitude to life be our form of prayer."

Muir was one of a number of writers whose faith in God stopped at Christ. He was not a communicating member of any Christian Church, though he had been brought up as a Presbyterian. His stay in Rome, however, with the British Council, impressed him deeply with that city's ubiquitous reminders of Christ's Incarnation. "That these images," he tells us, "should appear everywhere . . . seemed to me natural and right. . . . This open declaration was to me the very mark of Christianity, distinguishing it from the older religions. For although the pagan gods had visited the earth and conversed with men, they did not

assume the burden of our flesh, live our life and die our death, but after their interventions withdrew into their impenetrable privacy."

As a critic, Muir combined fine perception of style with a gift for generalisation and for the treatment of abstract ideas. (In this matter, one should compare his essays on Nietzsche and Spengler, where the latter's deficient thought is observed by Muir as being expressed in a pseudo-brutal prose, so different from the former's dizzy sparkle and grace.)

In addition to the titles already mentioned, Muir had published other critical volumes, of which *Transition* (1926), *The Structure of the Novel* (1928) and *The Present Age* (1939) are the chief. The second of these is perhaps the most lucid exposition of fictional genres ever offered us by an English critic, and belongs—along with Percy Lubbock's *The Art of Fiction* and E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*—to the permanent literature on that subject.

A WORLD OF CONTRADICTIONS

A Study of Simone Weil

By

ELIZABETH JENNINGS

SIMONE WEIL, who died in England in 1943, and who had lived in the United States as well as in France, seems to have been one of those people who pursue their own destruction and who, therefore, in an age of uncertainty like our own, become something of a symbol. Yet it would be false and misleading to regard her simply as a symptom or a summing-up of her own age, for she was a person not a type, an eccentric not a conformist. Her life exemplified the distress and anxiety of her times, yet it was still *her* life and she lived out her own predicament, not anyone else's.

The most important thing to remember about Simone Weil is that she was Jewish. In the many books and articles which have been written about her, I do not think that this fact has been sufficiently emphasised. She was a Jewess uprooted from her own religion, so that in a double sense she was a wanderer: she had the instinctive Jewish need to wander and she also felt lost because she *was* uprooted, both from her own past and her own race. It was no chance matter that one of her books was concerned with man's "need for roots." Péguy said that Jews were either "merchants or prophets" and that one of their major characteristics was always to be "elsewhere." Simone Weil certainly had something of the prophet or seer in her temperament, but this was qualified by an extraordinarily fine intellect. In many ways she regarded the intellect as man's highest faculty, and it is not surprising that when, in *Waiting on God*, she wrote about humility, she suggested that thoughts of one's own stupidity were more likely to induce humility than reflections on one's wickedness.

Simone Weil was a Jewess who hated Judaism. The religion of the Old Testament seemed to her a bloodthirsty and barbaric thing. Yet one of the contradictions in her nature (and she was full of contradictions) was that she, like many orthodox Jews, was obsessed with the idea of sacrifice; the scapegoat was something much more vivid than a mere symbol to her. Firmly established in her mind too was the idea of election or choice. Most of the books and essays which have been written about her, particularly those by Fr. Perrin and Gustave Thibon, are concerned with why she would not be baptised until she felt that God had personally and unmistakably indicated to her that she should be. Myself, I believe that this particular aspect of "waiting on God" was part of her Jewish inheritance; it went much deeper than arrogance or egotism and was, perhaps, something beyond her conscious control.

And this is the all-important fact to bear in mind in any examination of Simone Weil's life and thought—that, precise and luminous as her intellect was, and assured as she herself was of its paramount efficacy, she was by no means always guided by it; her mind often moved more by intuition than by rational argument. It is here that Simone Weil enters the world of the poet and the mystic, who have this in common—that their experience, while it does not deny the rational faculty, transcends the rational faculty. It is true that Simone Weil was not a poet in the strictly literal sense but, in those parts of her writing where images took over, she approximated to poetry. On the other hand, there appears to be very little doubt that she had had mystical experience. In the following passage in *Waiting on God*, she gives an account of it:

In my arguments about the insolubility of the problem of God I had never foreseen the possibility of that, of a real contact, person to person, here below, between a human being and God. I had vaguely heard tell of things of this kind, but I had never believed in them. In the *Fioretti* the accounts of apparitions rather put me off if anything, like the miracles in the Gospel. Moreover, in this sudden possession of me by Christ, neither my senses nor my imagination had any part; I only felt in the midst of my suffering the presence of a love, like that which one can read in the smile of a beloved face.

One of the many interesting things about this experience and

Simone Weil's reaction to it is that, although she was never baptised into the Catholic Church, her attitude towards this particular experience was very close to that of the orthodox Western Christian tradition. But there *were* points where Simone Weil diverged from this orthodoxy; she was obsessed, for example, with the idea of syncretism, with that system of religious thought which endeavours to integrate the dogmas and traditions of many creeds and to make a whole from them. She loved Greece and its religion and philosophy with an almost fanatical passion; the contemplative religions of the East were also extremely sympathetic to her temperament.

I have said already that Simone Weil appeared to be in pursuit of her own destruction. This is, however, only half the truth. Her utter disregard for her health and personal well-being, the determination with which she sought the kind of life which would bring not only discomfort but illness, her love of the poor and the oppressed—these things were, at one and the same time, a pursuit both of perfection and of destruction. But it would be wrong to suppose that she was a masochist. She did not love pain and suffering for their own sake but because she felt they united her with Christ whom she worshipped both as God and man. Her whole doctrine of "affliction" (and by affliction she meant bodily, mental and social dereliction) is based on the idea of participation in the passion of Christ. In this she resembled many of the great saints and mystics of the past, and especially Augustine and Teresa of Avila with whom she shared a fineness of intellect combined with strong emotion and the need to seek out appropriate images to express her experiences.

Like so many people who have been the recipients of some form of mystical experience, Simone Weil *questioned* her experience; she was eager to know its meaning and purpose. She shared with Teresa and John of the Cross that distaste for the sham that is so often the purest indication of a genuine and humble apprehension of the presence of God. Thus, she followed her brief account of her own mystical experience with these qualifying comments:

I had never read any mystical works because I had never felt any call to read them. In reading as in other things I have always striven to practise obedience. There is nothing more favourable to

intellectual progress, for as far as possible I only read what I am hungry for, at the moment when I have an appetite for it, and then I do not read, I *eat*. God in His mercy had prevented me from reading the mystics, so that it should be evident to me that I had not invented this absolutely unexpected contact.

Yet I still refused, not my love but my intelligence. For it seemed to me certain, and I still think so to-day, that one can never wrestle enough with God if one does so out of pure regard for the truth. . . . After this I came to feel that Plato was a mystic, that all the *Iliad* is bathed in Christian light, and that Dionysus and Osiris are in a certain sense Christ himself; and my love was thereby redoubled.

I never wondered whether Jesus was or was not the incarnation of God; but in fact I was incapable of thinking of Him without thinking of God.

These passages raise several important points. Firstly, the equating of Christ with Dionysus and Osiris not only displays Simone Weil's passionate desire for some form of syncretism, but also show that her whole approach to experience was closer to the poet's than to the pure mystic's. The emphasis she lays on the necessity of the play of the intelligence even in the midst of the most apparently inexplicable experience is one indication of this. The other is her painstaking search for symbols, for equivalents. Christ is Christ, yes, but He is also seen by her as Dionysus and Osiris. Time is set aside, history is, for the moment, in abeyance, and indeed, for the poet, symbols are always timeless since they can be brought to life over and over again in the blinding clarity of an individual vision.

The idea also of man's wrestling with God is a poetic as well as a religious conception; it is an image which tries to give bodily expression to a sense of spiritual torment and striving. Hopkins had also used this image when he wrote,

. . . that night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling
with (my God!) my God.

It is here, I think, that we are at the very heart of Simone Weil's message and the extraordinary paradox of her life. She devoted an entire book to the subject of "waiting on God," yet in her expression of the search for Christ and for the life of prayer she was always active, exploring, feverish for fact. Even stillness and attentiveness were matters for intellectual examination; there is,

in fact, in her entire work, little of that total abandonment to God which is so shiningly evident in every Christian mystic who preceded her.

The restless demands of the intellect, the search for suitable imagery—these are the things which place Simone Weil among the poets (in the broadest sense) rather than in the company of the pure mystics. For, as Bremond has indicated in *Prayer and Poetry*, the poet's very vocation is in some way to spoil experience by the need to find language which will embody it. In this sense, every communication of religious experience necessarily taints the initial insight. And words, however lovely, always have the seed of betrayal within them. The awareness of this was constantly in Simone Weil's mind; she trusted in words even while she knew how treacherous they could be. She loved the silence that falls between one utterance and another, but she also knew that the silence was itself intensified by the speech which preceded and followed it. She said, in some passages discussing her own meditation on the words of the *Pater Noster*:

At times the very words tear my thoughts from my body and transport it to a place outside space where there is neither perspective nor point of view. The infinity of the ordinary expanses of perception is replaced by an infinity to the second and sometimes the third degree. At the same time, filling every part of this infinity of infinity, there is silence, a silence which is not an absence of sound but which is the object of a positive sensation, more positive than that of sound. Noises, if there are any, only reach me after crossing this silence.

The urgency and eagerness of this sort of writing are very obvious; Simone Weil's intellect could never be wholly pacified but must forever be examining, appraising and drawing conclusions. Her intense seeking out of personal and often physical suffering was, I believe, partly a half-conscious attempt to abandon the demands of her intelligence. She *knew* that she was dazzled by the brilliance of her own intellect, and so she sought darkness and oblivion in outward affliction, in the anonymous lives of factory workers and peasants, in the rejection not only of material pleasure but also of material necessities. Her way of life led to sickness, though it was something much deeper than sickness only that she was searching for. What she was seeking is revealed in the following words:

It is not that I feel within me a capacity for intellectual creation. But I feel obligations which are related to such a creation. It is not my fault. Nobody but myself can appreciate these obligations. The conditions of intellectual or artistic creation are so intimate and secret that no one can penetrate into them from the outside. I know that artists excuse their bad actions in this way. But it has to do with something very different in my case.

The note of protest here, the half-aware eschewing of authority, the wish for an autonomous world created by the mind *for* the mind, are more consonant with the attitude of the poet or artist than with that of the dedicated person of prayer.

It does seem, then, that the conflict in Simone Weil's life was something much more subtle than the force of Christian teaching invading a very Jewish mind, or even than the wish for assurance and truth at odds with an appetite for uncertainties. There is something *manqué* about all Simone Weil's work, and I think the explanation for this is that she was both a writer *manqué* and a mystic *manqué*. What one senses most powerfully in her work is a profound duality, a duality of which she herself was perfectly conscious when she wrote,

If still persevering in our love, we fall to the point where the soul cannot keep back the cry "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?", if we remain at this point without ceasing to love, we end by touching something which is not affliction, which is not joy; something which is the central essence, necessary and pure; something not of the senses, common to joy and sorrow; something which is the very love of God.

We know then that joy is the sweetness of contact with the love of God, that affliction is the wound of this same contact when it is painful, and that only the contact matters, not the manner of it.

These words, which could so easily be paralleled in the writings of Julian of Norwich or Teresa of Avila, describe an experience which is valid, honest, pure and indisputable; and yet the attitude of Simone Weil towards the experience, her desire for a perilous balance of opposites, her acceptance which has in it the note of despair (like hunting horns heard far off) as well as resignation, reveal that even in apparent serenity she could find anguish and uncertainty. For the truth is that when the saints and mystics have cried out to God in a language that sounded like despair, there has always been a profound and

humble acceptance at the heart of their suffering—something very different from anxiety or doubt. What Simone Weil did was to assign to the moment of prayer the kind of anxiety which, in human experience, is only proper to the artist—the anguish of the poet, whenever words seem to fail his experience. It is as if Eliot's "intolerable wrestle with words and meanings" were transferred to the life of prayer, the communication of man with God. This, I am sure, was the conflict which prevented Simone Weil's request for baptism. It was not humility that she lacked but rather that she possessed the wrong kind of humility—a humility which is proper to the poet when he moves in the world of language and symbols, but wrong for the mystic who knows that pride and humility can work in the intellect as well as in the will: and who, therefore, acknowledges that both intellect and will must be placed in God's hands and resigned to His purposes.

These reflections are, to a certain extent, corroborated in the brief biography which Gustave Thibon wrote about his friend. He is expressly concerned with the central conflict in Simone Weil's nature and attempts to reconcile her humility with her apparent aloofness, her intelligence with her passion, and, most subtle of all, her desire for detachment with her inability to be detached from detachment itself. For her, he says, "genius meant . . . the opening of the intelligence of man to the wisdom of God." He goes on to examine the contradictions in her character and says,

On the one hand there was a longing for absolute self-effacement, an unlimited opening to reality even under its harshest forms, and, on the other, a terrible self-will at the very heart of the self-stripping; the inflexible desire that this stripping should be her own work and should be accomplished in her own way, the consuming temptation to verify from within, to test everything and experience everything for herself.

"To verify everything from within"—this admirably sums up Simone Weil's attitude to philosophy, art and religious experience. In the West, there have for many centuries been two streams of mystical literature—that which embodies the affirmation of images (exemplified by writers like Traherne), and that which approves the rejection of images, the way of which St. John of the Cross is the supreme exemplar. But Simone Weil's experiences and writings do not fit completely into either

of these categories; she *wished* to reject images and yet could never quite manage to relinquish them. As she said,

Perhaps, . . . it may be given me, at least for a few moments, to receive the reward attached to work on the land and to none other, the feeling that the earth, the sun, the landscape really exist and are something more than mere scenery.

There is surely more than a suggestion of pantheism in this sort of speculation.

In spite of her penetrating intellect and her uncompromising honesty, there does seem to have been an element of self-deception in Simone Weil's thought; so often she seems to cling to the *means* when it is the end that she really desires. In this she resembles the poet who, when the poem is written, the end achieved, is no longer interested but only desires the means towards yet another end, another completed work. M. Thibon touches on this dilemma when he compares Simone Weil with Rimbaud:

Someone has described Rimbaud as "a mystic in the wild state." Such a judgment can only be applied in a very indirect manner to Simone Weil. I have, however, often wondered how far certain very subtle values of western civilisation had penetrated to the deepest levels of her nature. What she lacked was that suppleness with regard to destiny . . . that spontaneous and actual sense of proportion which makes it possible to see everything in its right relationship. . . .

This lack M. Thibon ascribes, rightly I am sure, to her Jewish blood and temperament. "Is there," he asks, "anything more Jewish than the perpetual tension and uneasiness, the urge to examine and test the great realities?" The Jews, for centuries, have been notable for their artistic and creative qualities and perhaps it is not too far-fetched to suggest that there is some connection between a race which needed to wander and which could never find a resting-place, and the artist's own personal, and never satisfied, quest for a perfect work of art. Gustave Thibon quotes some highly relevant reflections on this matter from a letter which Simone Weil wrote to him about his own writing:

You have already experienced the dark night, but it is my belief that a great deal of it still remains for you to pass through before giving your true measure; for you are far from having attained in

expression, and hence in thought, to the degree of utter stripping, nakedness and piercing force which is indispensable to the style which belongs to you.

Here, she puts the language of mysticism at the service of literature and it seems clear that, divided as she was in so many other ways, she was convinced of the unity of prayer and poetic experience. Thomas Merton has written, in his diary *The Sign of Jonas*, of the difficulty of living the life of prayer with the equipment of the artist. I think that Simone Weil always had this difficulty in mind. The reason why she seems to have been unable to resolve it was that while affirming intellectually the possible union of prayer and poetry, she could not herself live out this possibility. Her great respect for the intellect tended to make her underrate the power of the imagination.

M. Thibon makes some profound remarks about this problem when he discusses the nature of her genius. It was, he says, "of a philosophic and religious order," and was therefore founded on the intellect. Yet the play of the imagination and of the senses seldom ceased with her, even when she refused to recognise it. M. Thibon suggests that many of Simone Weil's writings should be taken on the level of "myths"—in other words, as analogies and images which are valid as adumbrations or glimmerings of experiences which soar *above* the intellect though they do not deny it.

In Simone Weil we are presented with an unquestionably complex character. Hers was a world of contradictions in which there was room both for the ideal human beauty of Greece and for the most austere ascetical practices of northern Europe. Such ideas, such opposites were accepted by her even while they could never be reconciled to each other. Philosophic and speculative as her cast of mind was, there is no system or method in her thought: there are footnotes and foreshadowings only. She longed to surrender herself completely yet lacked the ultimate confidence which hands over everything, even contradictions, into God's care.

At the beginning of this essay I suggested that Simone Weil was, in many ways, a symbol of the troubled times in which she lived. In a world of war, starvation, suffering and anxiety, she tried to give a meaning to these things by bearing them in her own life and reflecting them in her writings. She was too

clear-sighted to see any easy remedies, while the nature of her own gifts prevented her finally from seeing the deep-rooted connection between a sense of guilt and a sense of God.

WHERE ARE CATHOLIC ETHICS?

I WONDER how many other Catholics are inclined, like myself, to harass our learned friends with the demand to be told of a "really good book on Catholic Ethics." "Catholic for choice, but any really good statement of Christian Ethics would be a joy to know."

No one can fail to admire or profit from the small books of Fr. Coventry and Fr. Keane, but they could be expanded five-fold with advantage, and only the former of them sets out to cope with the problems as formulated by secular contemporaries. If one persists in one's search one will presumably be directed to Fr. Rickaby's *Moral Philosophy*. But his invaluable book was first published in 1890, and in spite of later revisions one must feel that a completely new book, or, failing that, a complete re-writing of this treatise or of Cronin's *Ethics* is many years overdue. That is if by Ethics we are referring to a branch of philosophy otherwise described as moral philosophy, of which more a little later on!

These thoughts are revived in full measure by a study of Dr. Munitz's *Modern Introduction to Ethics*.¹ It is an expensive book but well worth the price, if not for professionals, at any rate for all serious amateurs of Ethics. There are selections from forty-four writers, including Plato, Nietzsche and Lord Russell on the search for ethical standards; Aristotle, Epicurus, Bentham and John Stuart Mill on the pursuit of happiness; Epictetus, Kant and Sir David Ross on devotion to duty: Zimmer (Buddhahood); Niebuhr (the ethic of Jesus), and Schopenhauer on the spiritual life. Other sections deal with free will, responsibility and guilt, and justice and social ethics. One has the feeling that the editor attaches special importance to the last two chapters. "The logic of ethical discourse" is covered by G. E. Moore, A. J. Ayer, Charles L. Stevenson, A. C. Ewing and P. H. Nowell-Smith, which leaves "the modern subjectivists," though I am aware that they will repudiate the title, with the casting vote and the last word.

The same is still more obviously true of the grand finale. The five personal statements of a philosophy of life are by Arnold Toynbee, Maritain, Freud, Einstein and Maurice R. Cohen in that order. The last piece, we are told, "expresses as do the essays by Einstein and Freud

¹ *A Modern Introduction to Ethics*, by Milton K. Munitz (Allen and Unwin 63s).

what a naturalistic and humanistic philosophy has to offer as a guide to life. It is a philosophy that takes its basic inspiration, not from religion, but from the methods of Science and the exercise of liberal intelligence." I hope that I am not doing Dr. Munitz an injustice, if I am I apologise in advance, by assuming that his selection of Dr. Cohen as anchor man for the whole symposium throws light on his own personal point of view.

It is no surprise to find that in my view Christians are under-represented and Catholics grossly under-represented in what is none the less a highly useful collection. A comparison is possible with a very similar-looking volume entitled *Moral Principles of Action* presenting thirty-five contributors under the editorship of Ruth Nanda Anshen, which appeared in 1952. There is some overlapping. Maritain, Niebuhr and Fromm appear, for example, in both volumes. But the importance of editorial selection could hardly be plainer. Fr. D'Arcy, Dr. Tillich and Dr. Schweitzer are prominent in *Moral Principles of Action*, while they do not even figure in *A Modern Introduction to Ethics*. It is the other way round with Lord Russell and Professor Ayer. (The passage of time from 1952-1957 has apparently nothing to do with it.) Professor Ayer's contribution is dated 1949, and there is nothing up to the minute about the others.

There is not unnaturally much scope given in the latest chapters to contemporary stars like Professor Ayer, and there are some very interesting passages quoted from an article which Professor Ayer wrote ten years ago for *Horizon*.

Obviously the tender spot of certain gifted modern philosophers is the difficulty of reconciling their own moral conduct with their non-moral philosophy, and, connected with this, of meeting the criticism that their moral philosophy, if adopted, will make people less moral than before. Professor Ayer rescues himself, in so far as he does so at all, by restricting the scope of moral philosophy and by deciding with his colleagues that it is to be defined in future in a much narrower sense than in the past. "It is indeed to be expected," he proceeds, "that a moral philosopher even in my sense of the term will have his moral standards and will sometimes make moral judgments, but these moral judgments cannot be a logical consequence of his philosophy. To analyse moral judgments is not in itself to moralise."

A page or so later he adds, "I doubt if the study of moral philosophy does in general have any marked effect upon people's conduct." That last statement would surely be untenable if we were drawing illustrations from Plato and Aristotle downwards, not to mention St. Thomas Aquinas, but if moral philosophy has been narrowed down by definition or deliberate academic practice or both to a tiny compass it may

well be as uninfluential as Professor Ayer suggests and as unimportant a subject of study. That is in theory. Those who believe in the positive influence which moral philosophy has exercised and exercised for good will fear two evil consequences in practice of the modern restrictionism, first, that the positive benefits of great moral philosophy will be denied to students, and, secondly, that the idea will be disseminated, in practice if not in theory, that it is less of a rational necessity than one had thought to do what seems to be one's duty. Fashions change, and in any case Britain in 1959 is not the world in the twentieth century. But there seems some slight reaction against moral restrictionism in its more extreme forms.

Where do Catholic ethics come into all this? Not, on the face of things, very much. The word "Ethics" is, of course, used in various quite different senses which are supposed to be well defined, but are freely confused with each other. When someone says that he accepts Christian ethics he may mean that he is trying to live a life in accordance with the Christian moral code. (He sometimes excludes Christian sexual ethics from his aspiration, but if so he is in need of enlightenment.) He may mean that he has studied Christian doctrine systematically beginning with the New Testament and proceeding, if a Catholic, through the Catechism to a standard theological treatise such as that of Davis. Theology, of course, is based on Revelation, but in working out Christian ethics in the full sense philosophy, that is the use of the human reason, unassisted by Revelation is invoked. Philosophy is described by Davis "as the handmaid of Theology" and is obviously the much less important partner for the Catholic concerned with moral truth. Nevertheless, a mention of Christian ethics may refer to Christian philosophical ethics without Theology (reason without Revelation), or even more narrowly within that subject to Ethics as distinct from Deontology and Natural Law.

It is not surprising if leading Catholic thinkers all the world over are reluctant to give time and energy to "pure" moral philosophy, to devote their lives to it to the same extent as secularists, for some of whom at least it is a substitute for religion. With us it is relatively minor, but there is a more difficult issue. There is an impression that the divorce between what might be called Catholic truth and non-Christian philosophy is especially glaring just now and unless one is right in detecting a broadening in non-Christian philosophy there may be something in that. But students of the spiritual letters of Dom John Chapman may remember some tremendous "letters" written in 1911 to a Jesuit scholastic who was, it seems, inclined to compare scholastic unfavourably with non-Christian philosophy. "You have looked," said Dom John Chapman, "into philosophy to find the answer to the riddle of the Universe. Some modern non-Christian philosophers do

try to give it, but they don't satisfy you with the system and first principles. . . . Scholastic philosophy does not try. It refuses to try. It asserts that it cannot. You were disappointed in it because you looked into it for what it professes not to give. But theology does give the answer and that is why scholastic philosophy refuses to give it but only prepares the way."

Much later, he concludes, "I infer that non-Christian, semi-Christian and non-Catholic philosophies are all somewhat dangerous reading except to one who has already a reasoned faith, *i.e.*, a reasoned outline of what theology lays down." Which suggests that the ideal formation for Catholics, including Catholic laymen, would be a combined instruction in Catholic theology and philosophy before the study of non-Christian philosophy, or at least alongside it. One can picture that ideal being realised in a Catholic country, *e.g.*, present-day Ireland. It is wildly unlike the actual situation in Britain. The difficulties of giving effect to it here are enormous. Dare one suggest a much more systematic instruction in theology and in the elements of philosophy for intellectual boys in the higher classes of Public and Grammar schools, with a subsidiary place for apologetics? An urgent task much easier to perform is the writing of one or more books of Catholic Ethics. They need not be for scholars only. They must do for Catholic Ethics, the whole theological-philosophical compound, what Mr. Sheed has so brilliantly done for general theology. They must prepare the Catholic mind for the kind of questions raised by the secular philosophers so acutely, *e.g.*, in Greats, Modern Greats, etc., at Oxford. "Can a moral judgment be said to be true or false," etc. etc.? Questions of this sort cannot be disposed of by ready made apologetic answers, but they can be placed in a perspective which enables the Catholic to bring an uninhibited mind to bear on them, assisted by the genius of centuries.

If we come across a weighty symposium which purports to be representative of ethical thought and find very little that is Catholic and not very much that is Christian there are probably three answers: (1) the bias of the Editor, (2) the fact that the best Catholic minds are concerned with deeper things than the topics which pre-occupy Ethicists, particularly modern ones, and draw much strength from sources which are inadmissible, or at any rate unadmitted in that kind of argument, and (3) the gulf which exists and has long existed between Catholic thinkers and secular philosophers in Britain has left a good many Catholics with one foot on each side of the gulf, unable to make their best contribution to either religion or morals.

And this third difficulty is surely one which it lies within our power to put right.

PAKENHAM

REVIEWS

QUEEN MARY

Queen Mary, 1867-1953, by James Pope-Hennessy (Allen and Unwin 42s).

THIS ENTRANCING BIOGRAPHY is a delight to read, as it is not only well informed but brilliantly written and bubbles with caustic humour. It casts much new light not only on Queen Mary's background and character, but on the personality of many of her elders and contemporaries on some of whom Mr. Pope-Hennessy's comments are so acid that his obvious and consistent admiration of the central figure becomes all the more striking.

The difficulties and frustrations of Queen Mary's early life will probably surprise those who have always thought of her as the embodiment of royal majesty. In fact, as a shy and sensitive girl, a poor relation of English royalty, she was distressed and humiliated, not only by the constant financial difficulties in which her eccentric parents were involved, but also by the mortification of being regarded as only imperfectly royal. The trouble was that, whilst her mother was a British Royal Highness and a first cousin to Queen Victoria, her father, as the son of a morganatic union, was debarred from royal status even though his own father was a Prince of the House of Württemberg. This meant that he and his four children had to be content with the improvised title of Teck and the status of "Serene Highness."

Princess May resembled but little, except in colouring and complexion, her smiling, popular but somewhat absurd Mamma, commonly known to the people as "Fat Mary." The Duchess of Teck's extravagance was a byword, and Princess May's shyness, reserve, discretion and thrift doubtless derived in large measure from her determination to avoid her mother's excesses in the opposite direction. The young Princess was so painfully shy and reserved that she sometimes appeared, in the Empress Frederick's words, "very stiff and cold"; but to those who knew her well, such as her devoted Alsatian *dame de compagnie*, Madame Bricka, and her beloved Aunt Augusta, she did not seem to be either, and we find her aunt writing to her: "What I love in you is the truth and strength of your character, the charm of being both serious and gay."

Mr. Pope-Hennessy is, I think, the first to give us a full account of Princess May's touching relationship with her aunt just mentioned who, born an English Princess, a granddaughter of George III, had lived in Germany as Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz since

1843. It was about her relationship with this shrewd and patriotic old Guelph Princess that Queen Mary wrote: "It was one of the strongest affection and I was much more like a daughter to her than a niece." From her aunt it was that she derived, in large measure, that pride in her "English family" which became the ruling passion of her life.

Indeed, despite her predominantly German ancestry, Queen Mary seems to have felt surprisingly little affection for the land whence her Württemberg grandfather, her Hessian grandmother (the Duchess of Cambridge) and her Hanoverian ancestors had sprung. As far back as 1892 we find her writing from Ludwigsburg to Madame Bricka, "Thank God I belong to a great nation," and she wrote to her aunt that she was "English from top to toe." It is true that her appearance was always rather Germanic, and we are told that when young she was more admired at the Courts of Berlin and Vienna than in London; she also possessed certain admirable Teutonic traits of character, such as her love of drawing up lists, docketing and tidying up. As Mr. Pope-Hennessy remarks, if she had not been a Queen Consort, she would have made "an admirable and efficient Museum Curator." As it was she became an expert on royal iconography and did a great work in regrouping and completing the Royal Collections at Windsor and elsewhere.

Princess May's successive engagements to her two young cousins, Princes Albert Victor (known as Prince Eddy) and George, are described at length, and the predominant part played by Queen Victoria in arranging them is made evident, as also her motive, which was to infuse a new and more vigorous strain into the rather tired Wales progeny ("Alix," the Queen said of her daughter-in-law, "has added no strength to the family").

"A good sensible wife is what he wants, but where is she to be found?" the Prince of Wales had written about his apathetic heir, Prince Eddy, and the answer clearly seemed to be "With the Tecks." Princess May's immediate acceptance of what she admits to have been the unexpected proposal of her cousin may surprise the modern reader, but Mr. Pope-Hennessy shows convincingly that to a girl of her mentality and with her veneration of the Monarchy, a refusal of the dazzling offer would have seemed inconceivable. Also it would appear that she had some affection for her poor Eddy (perhaps of the protective variety); why otherwise should she have written in her diary after he died: "*Es wär zu schön gewesen, es hat nicht sollen sein*"?

None the less Prince George, a good-living and right-minded young man, was in reality a far more suitable match for the sage and virtuous Princess May. Drawn together by common grief, the natural affection felt for each other by the two cousins soon blossomed into love, and shortly after the honeymoon we find the Prince (now Duke of York)

writing to his bride: "I adore you, sweet May, I cannot say more than that." Life at Sandringham in the early years of marriage was not, we learn, altogether easy for the young Duchess of York. The Princess of Wales, lovely and gracious though she was, remained a possessive mother, and neither she nor her daughters, any more than Prince George, shared Princess May's intellectual interests. She for her part never cared for the perpetual chaff and knockabout humour (imported from the Danish Court) which amused her relations-in-law. Little by little, however, she succeeded in weaning her husband from undue dependence on "Motherdear" and his sisters, and their marriage, as all the world knows, became a highly successful one, reminiscent of that of their ancestors, King George III and Queen Charlotte. Like these, however, they were not, at any rate while their children were young, particularly successful parents. Incidentally one is told less than one would have wished about Queen Mary's relationship with her children.

I find it a blemish in this admirable book that it should devote so much more space to the first half of Queen Mary's life than to the second, including the quarter-century of her husband's reign. It seems extraordinary, for instance, that the chapter entitled "A War-time Queen" should occupy only twenty-one pages out of the total 622. One would have thought too that, after all these years, we could have been told something about the reactions both of Queen Mary and of King George V to the distressing though unavoidable situation whereby, on the outbreak of war with Germany they found that so large a proportion of their closest relatives were in the enemy camp. So great, however, is the reticence of Mr. Pope-Hennessy on what would once no doubt have been a delicate subject that he even relegates to an unduly brief footnote his account of the changes in name and title which the King imposed in 1917 on the English members of the Saxe-Coburg, Teck, Battenberg and Schleswig-Holstein families.

Queen Mary's reverence for the Throne was such that when her father-in-law, whom she had not hitherto greatly admired, ascended the throne as Edward VII, he was suddenly invested in her eyes with "an aura so bright that it made her blink." In the same way, when her own excellent but scarcely majestic husband assumed the Crown, he could henceforth do no wrong and his petulance must go unchecked, even at the expense of the children's feelings. "I must never forget," she told a friend, "that he is their King as well as their Father." Such being Queen Mary's mentality, we can picture her consternation on learning that her eldest son, now himself raised to the mystic state of Monarch, was prepared to give up the Throne in order to marry a divorced lady. No single event in Queen Mary's whole life caused her, we are told, "such distress" or left her with

"so deep a feeling of humiliation." "It seemed," she wrote in 1938 to the Duke of Windsor, "incredible to those who had made such sacrifices during the War that you, their King, should refuse a lesser sacrifice." "All my life," she added, "I have put my country before anything else and I cannot change now." It was true; throughout her long life, the longest led by any English Queen, she had put duty first and while never seeking popularity, but rather shunning it, with no airs or graces, only a serene dignity reflecting her innate goodness, she had won in the end, not merely the respect but the love, of the country to which she had given her heart.

HUGH MONTGOMERY

R. A. KNOX

The Life of the Right Reverend Ronald Knox, by Evelyn Waugh (Chapman and Hall 30s).

THOSE OF US who have been reading and re-reading Ronald Knox's *Spiritual Aeneid* ever since its first appearance in the spring of 1918, who have a good working knowledge of his father's remarkably fresh *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian* (published in 1935), must be gratified to find that neither of these primary sources is taken for granted by Mr. Waugh in his beautifully written and informative book. The late Mr. Wilfred Ward, having in mind the Cardinal's wishes and own story in the *Apologia*, compressed almost the whole of Newman's Anglican life into a single chapter of just over fifty pages. This was not an example to be followed here, the more so since Ronald came to consider his youthful work as a period piece, to be regarded with distaste. Mr. Waugh has, it is almost needless to say, made considerable use of *A Spiritual Aeneid*, but, quite apart from the many details here given about the two families of Knox and French, he has enriched, supplemented, and at some points clarified the earlier work. The first book of the present *Life* bears the title "Laughter and the Love of Friends," and discusses in turn Ronald's heredity, environment, education, performance, and accomplishment up to the outbreak of the first World War. Book II ("Keeping an Armageddon") is but a single chapter, which includes the three storm-tossed years before Ronald's reception into the Catholic Church at Farnborough on 22 September, 1917. The third and last book ("The Hidden Stream") is concerned with its subject's life as a Catholic from "the dark and hungry winter of 1917" until his death at the Old Manor House, Mells, on 24 August, 1957, when he had been a Catholic for just less than forty years.

All the essential facts and dates are given in these pages, almost always

with remarkable accuracy. There is no attempt made, as in Fr. Martindale's life of Mgr. R. H. Benson (is there any better *livre de chevet* than this?) to analyse systematically and comment upon the many books, sermons and articles that are listed in the appendix, but Mr. Waugh has more than a word to say about the works of major importance, and about those minor works that have a bearing upon Ronald's life or character.

Mr. Waugh in his preface well stresses the fact that "Ronald Knox lacked only longevity to be a national figure. . . . He died at sixty-nine still essentially a private person." He goes on to claim that his book's "primary purpose is to tell the story of his exterior life, not to give a conspectus of his thought; still less to measure his spiritual achievement." In fact, Ronald's thought as it is revealed to us in his talk and writings is adequately presented, though only a few clues are provided in regard to the extent of his reading. In his *Spiritual Aeneid* he sets out a long list of works that enabled him to "read round" (his own words) the subject of the Papacy while he was a master at Shrewsbury. These included the whole of Creighton's *Papacy*, Gairdner's *Lollardy and the Reformation*, Ward's *Newman*, and Church's *Oxford Movement*. There appear to be no similar lists for later periods in his life, apart from the long but rather incomplete one in *Enthusiasm*. In his delicious "French with tears" he mentions that he had "got through seven or eight of the late Abbé Bremond's admirable volumes" on French spirituality. Otherwise, it may be doubted whether so assiduous a writer had all the time for reading that he might have desired.

About his spiritual life, concerning which his biographer gives us some moving details, Ronald was always most reticent. He would have approved the *fond*, if not perhaps the form, of a sentence in one of the late Fr. Garrold's stories: "There is a holy of holies in everybody's soul into which none but the high priest may enter."

The many references to his character are carefully indexed. Among other features one may allude to his insularity (did he ever revisit Rome after 1907?), his accessibility, his liking (shared with his friend Belloc) for definite plans, his diffidence and humility, and his courtesy to his opponents. It may be true that he was incapable of snubbing anybody in a rude or heartless way, but he could when necessary put a man decisively in his place, sometimes with hardly any use of words.

It is at least arguable that the note of suffering in his life is overstressed here. He was unquestionably a great sufferer from dyspepsia since the time of his dangerous operation as an Eton boy in 1906 until his life's end. His mental sufferings, if at times acute, were not so persistent as those of his fellow-priests who have been made responsible for the interest and capital repayment of a heavy debt. He endured stoically a great disappointment over his *Manual of Prayers* translation, but this

was of its very nature a somewhat controversial enterprise, and even the official approbation at first accorded to it could not force the clergy to like it. The delays and set-backs regarding his version of the Bible have been shared at various times by most translators of *Holy Writ* from St. Jerome onwards, and there can be little doubt that the version, like its predecessors, benefited from the additional labour that had to be devoted to it.

JOHN M. T. BARTON

FRENCH CATHEDRALS

The Cathedrals of France, by R. P. Howgrave-Graham (Batsford 35s).

M^{R.} HOWGRAVE-GRAHAM writes as an enthusiastic admirer of French architecture, but, as an official of the Munitiment Room at Westminster Abbey and a trained engineer, he has a good deal more than a merely enthusiastic approach to recommend him. The book deals with 49 major cathedrals and 83 lesser ones and is illustrated by 121 excellent photographs. With such a vast amount of material to deal with (no single cathedral, however important, is allotted more than two or three pages), this cannot be regarded as a profound study of the matter in hand: equally it would be doing an injustice to the author's scholarship to call it merely a guide-book. It may be taken rather as an introduction to French ecclesiastical architecture, and as such may be read with profit not only by the ignorant but no less by those to whom the subject is already familiar. There are one or two small misprints: the French word *sacrement*, given an accent, and on page 118 the height of the *flèche* on Notre Dame is surely understated. Again, in speaking of Beauvais, we are told that "in 1555 was built, on a square base, an octagonal spire 475 feet high," and that "an immense lamp, hung from the apex, lit the interior." But where was the square base? On the top of the vault? And what interior did the lamp illumine? Surely not that of the church from such a height above it.

The Catholic reader will find himself being reminded of the author's Anglican provenance by frequent references to "the Virgin," by such remarks as "Henri IV, after he became a Roman Catholic," and "In France the addition of radiating chapels . . . brought the whole system into one splendid co-ordinated design, adapted perfectly to the modes of *worship and ritual of the time*." But these are small blemishes, and when all is said one cannot but be grateful to both author and publisher for so valuable a contribution towards the better understanding of a fascinating subject. It is moreover pleasant to find deserved praise being given to Viollet-le-Duc for his outstanding work on so many of his country's cathedrals—except at Sens—since all too

often in books of this kind one finds the achievement of this great architect passed over with scant acknowledgement of the debt which posterity owes him.

JOHN McEWEN

THE HORSES OF THE NIGHT

Journey to the Ends of Time; Vol. I: Lost in the Dark Wood, by Sacheverell Sitwell (Cassell 35s).

JOURNEY TO THE ENDS OF TIME is a kaleidoscopic series of meditations on death and the possibility of survival. The form is predominantly allegorical although here and there direct metaphysical speculation intrudes to break the allegory. But the allegory is not always clear and the lack of any particular consistency in the individual tableaux makes it difficult to summarise Mr. Sitwell's conclusions in conceptual terms or to assess the relative strength of his disbeliefs.

The strictly speculative element is therefore largely unrewarding, although the book itself is a moving one. There are no new answers to the old questions raised by infant mortality, imbecile souls, dead animals, posthumous fame, the immortality of memory or the decomposition of the body, but all these problems are worth restating. If here, too, they remain unsolved, the paradoxes themselves emerge with poignant clarity from the luxuriously embroidered tapestry created by Mr. Sitwell outside the context of all religious revelation.

The illumination of death and its attendant mysteries is undertaken in an intricate mosaic of images and memories drawn from a personal experience more widely humane even than it is artistic. The introduction guides us step by step through the book:

Night Ride and Sunrise is the flight of the soul from the body after death. . . . It is at the start like the flight from a huge city in the atomic age during a Bank Holiday. Soon it turns into the Inferno of Hieronymus Bosch, one of whose drolls or demons comes to the side of the road to watch us. . . . This particular episode tells of survivors hiding in the top storeys of Rockefeller Center or the Empire State Building during a nuclear bombing. This "fades off" into Chartres, or some other medieval cathedral, on fire, with its rose-windows and stone statues melting in the flames. Next we are among the beggars and cripples of Brueghel's paintings, finding ourselves at the same time in the slums of Naples among Baroque churches where I have a momentary vision of myself when twenty years old.

The grandiose pattern is preserved with no frivolity, nor even humour, to disturb the seriousness of the imaginative structure. Occasionally a Kafkaesque technique is employed to evoke the state of the dead, as when the unidentifiable caller telephones during the Banquet on board the Ship of Fools, but generally the images are material and positive, the style polished and brilliant.

The difficulty of writing allegorically on death consists primarily in the inadequacy of the analogies of temporal experience. Mr. Sitwell, like all who use material images for the dead soul, is haunted by the timelessness and loneliness of the soul. To some extent the experience of loneliness and even timelessness is universal, but it is difficult to evoke the complete finality of the death-bed. Mr. Sitwell exorcises terror, lest it distract from clarity of vision, but his method appears at times almost incommensurate with his subject. The richly artistic inlay of the meditations, which is his especial strength and the great attraction of the book, robs death of its personal dimension, so that the dead soul, retaining only the vestigia of personality, is observed with a detached and skilful calm, while the finely-wrought variegation of the images in some sense idealises death and removes it from common experience. The state of the dead tends, therefore, as in the *Post Mortem on a Suicide*, to become merely interesting rather than awe-inspiring. The allegory of death is weakened by the artistry which allays fear.

Yet the sheer cultivation of the writing makes this a fascinating book, and the author's clarity and sensibility go a long way to redeeming the speculative weaknesses. There are pages of aphorisms—these more difficult, abstract passages are starred for those who wish to omit them, but they are not among the more valuable parts of the book—there is much uncommon erudition, psychological insight, ignorance on some points of religion. Paradoxically the main weakness in Mr. Sitwell's viewpoint is an insufficiently developed humanism. The author does not realise that his earthbound conception of death takes no account of the fact that each human being contains within himself the traces of belief in God, that one cannot ultimately know oneself without knowing one's dependence on an infinite divinity.

ANTHONY LEVI

Dear and Glorious Physician, by Taylor Caldwell (Collins 18s).

THIS is sub-titled "A Major Novel about St. Luke." It is, of course, nothing of the kind. It is a highly imaginative story of someone called Lucanus, born in Antioch, who goes through the conventional

experiences of a young man, and who is eventually converted to Christianity. There is absolutely no reason to suppose that the author of the third gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles had any of the experiences attributed to him here, and there is, in too many passages, more than a hint of sensual grossness hardly in keeping with a work presumably intended for the Christian believer. There is one scene in which the seduction of Lucanus is attempted by Julia. Julia, as we know, had no scruples in that matter; and Luke might have been a guest at the imperial table in Rome. We prefer our fiction a little more probable. But no doubt the late Mr. Cecil B. de Mille would have been interested.

The Loss of the Magyar, and Other Poems, by Patricia Beer (Longmans 10s 6d).

MINDFUL of the *Deutschland* and the *Eurydice*, one approached these poems with a certain prejudice: the perils of the men who went down to the sea in ships has been so well limned by Hopkins that it seemed presumptuous on the part of a woman to tackle a similar theme. This poem, however, which won second prize in the Cheltenham Festival Poetry Competition in 1958, is strikingly original, and well deserves the splendid production which its publishers have given it. The other twenty-five poems in the volume are full of taut and vivid images, and more should be heard of their gifted author, who has a fine sense of the value of words and of "all things counter, original, spare, strange." Her *Merman* is a striking example.

The Guinness Book of Poetry, II (Putnams 10s 6d).

L AURIE LEE, Louis MacNeice and the late Lennox Robinson were the choosers of these poems, some seventy of which were culled from three thousand entries. One sympathises with the judges of such competitions, but this very mixed grill contains some interesting ingredients. It seems that the angry young men are in poetical wane: perhaps, as Judith Wright has it in *Brother and Sister*, "the road turned out to be a cul-de-sac." Donagh MacDonagh, Anthony Thwaite and Christopher Hassall are well represented in this selection of poems, which is notable inasmuch as each poet is allowed only one poem, and the judges were given a free hand in their selection: the result is a very pleasing and catholic anthology. It is sad to think that the work of Lennox Robinson is ended.

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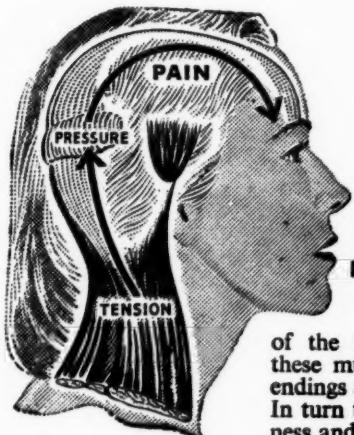


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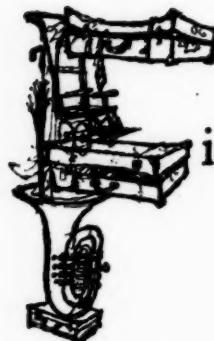
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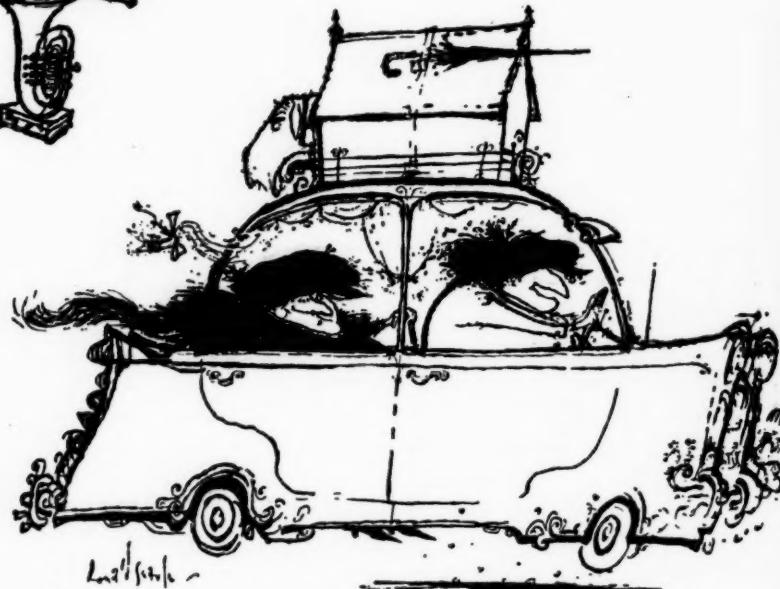
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